

subject, so that in a way it fails of its mission. It is gratifying therefore at a time when the support of the entire country is necessary, to the success of this movement to find a work such as Dr. Hornaday's which in originality of illustrations and method of presentation, *compels* the attention of everyone into whose hands it finds its way.

The first paragraphs of the preface sound the key note of the work: "Beyond question, we are exterminating our finest species of mammals, birds and fishes *according to law!* I am appalled by the mass of evidence proving that throughout the entire United States and Canada, in every state and province, the existing legal system for the preservation of wild life is fatally defective. There is not a single state in our country from which the killable game is not being rapidly and persistently shot to death, legally, or illegally, very much more rapidly than it is breeding, with extermination for the most of it close in sight. This statement is not open to argument; for millions of men know that it is literally true. We are living in a fool's paradise." In the 44 chapters into which the work is divided every phase of the subject is considered and the terse and forceful comments of the author follow the quotations on the title page "Hew to the line! Let the chips fall where they will"; "Nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice."

The book is a mine of information for the army of people who are enlisting in the effort to save our wild life from extermination and they can obtain here in concise form the facts and arguments that they require in carrying on the campaign.

There is a strong 'Foreword' by Dr. Henry Fairfield Osborn, President of the New York Zoological Society and a fitting dedication to Mr. William Dutcher, President of the National Association of Audubon Societies and "life-long champion of American birds."

All friends of wild life owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Hornaday and to the New York Zoological Society for the preparation and publication of such a work.

The Zoological Society's Bulletin for May, 1913, contains reproductions of many of the illustrations of Mr. Hornaday's work, with a fine colored plate of birds threatened with extinction and strong articles on Wild-life conservation.—W. S.

Mathews' 'The Birds of Australia.'¹—Three parts of Mr. Mathews' great work have appeared since our last issue. Part 5 of Volume 2 completes the account of the Pacific Gull and covers the Skuas, while the two parts of volume 3 deal with the Charadriiformes, treating of the *Morinellidæ* (Turnstones), *Hæmatopodidæ* (Oyster catchers), *Charadriidæ* (Plovers) *Recurvirostridæ* (Stilts and Avocets), and *Scolopacidæ* (Snipe etc.).

¹ The Birds of Australia. By Gregory M. Mathews. Vol. II., pt. 5, January 31 (pp. 477-527, pll. 121-124, Contents, Preface etc.); Vol. III., pt. 1, April 2 (pp. 1-104, pll. 125-137); pt. 2, May 2, (pp. 105-204, pll. 138-150). Witherby & Co., 326 High Holborn, London.

In discussing the Skuas, Mr. Mathews contends that the Pomerine Jaeger is much more closely allied to the true Skuas than to the other Jaegers, but as all three Jaegers differ from one another he proposes to place each in a genus of its own while he uses *Catharacta* Brünnich for the Skuas. *Stercorarius* is restricted to include only *S. parasiticus*; *Coprotheres* Reichenbach is used for *S. pomerinus* and *Atalolestris* gen. nov. is erected for *S. longicaudus*. *Catharacta lombergi clarkei* from the South Orkneys is described as new (p. 494), also *C. l. intercedens* from Kerguelen Isl. (p. 494) and *C. maccormicki wilsoni* from Weddell Sea (p. 495).

Mr. Mathew's rejection of Brisson's genera enables him to use *Catharacta* for the Skuas which would otherwise be untenable on account of the earlier *Catarractes*. We cannot agree with his attitude in the Brisson controversy. This is one of a number of mooted questions upon which the International Code may be differently interpreted and if we reject the vote of the Commission in these cases and insist on our personal views we might as logically do so in regard to the code itself. Uniformity is hopeless unless the vote of the Commission on such cases is accepted. Under the *Charadriiformes* we find a number of new generic names proposed viz.: *Afribex*, type *Vanellus lateralis* Smith (p. 41); *Rogibyx*, type *Xiphidiop-terus cucullatus* (Temm.) (p. 41); *Pagoo*, type *Charadrius geoffroyi* Wagl. (p. 82); *Eupodella*, type *Charadrius vicedus* (p. 83) *Pagolla*, type *Charadrius wilsonia* Ord. (p. 83) (*Octhodromus* being untenable on account of the prior *Octhedromus* Le Conte); *Afroxyechus*, type *Charadrius tricollaris* Vieill. (p. 124); *Elseya*, type *Charadrius melanops* Vieill. (p. 125); *Zarapita*, type *Numenius tenuirostris* Vieill. (p. 168); *Vetola*, type *Scolopax lapponica* L. (p. 191).

Also in spite of the fact that Mr. Mathews repeatedly states that he does not use subgenera we find three new names of this rank proposed on p. 114: *Pernettyva*, type *Charadrius falklandicus*; *Helenaegialus*, Lath. type *Ægialitis sanctahelenæ* Harting and *Paroxyechus*, type *Ægialitis placida* Gray and on p. 12 *Prohæmatopus*, type *Hæmatopus quoyi* Brab. & Chubb.

There is considerable discussion of exotic species under each generic heading and the history of generic subdivisions is given at length.

We find *Ægialitis mongolus* referred to a distinct genus *Cirripidesmus* Bonap., while the Curlews are divided and *Numenius hudsonicus* and *N. borealis* are referred to *Phæopus*.

We note but one new subspecies *Hypsibates leucocephalus timorensis* E. Timor (p. 150).

Mr. Mathews' extreme views upon generic subdivision bring into use many names usually relegated to synonymy and these together with the new ones which he proposes will provide names for almost, if not quite all the groups of *Charadriiformes* that can possibly be differentiated. Whether his nomenclature will be followed by others is open to question. His aim to be consistent in the amount of differentiation necessary for the recognition of a separate genus is praiseworthy, but consistency in judging questions of degree of difference involves the personal equation and can only be settled by the vote of a committee.

These parts of Mr. Mathews' work fully maintain the standard of their predecessors. We note with regret that while carefully designating type species for his new genera he still neglects to cite type specimens for his new species or subspecies.—W. S.

Official Check-List of the Birds of Australia.¹—A Committee of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union has been at work on a Check List of the birds of Australia for the past ten years. It is natural therefore that the result of their long deliberations which is at last before us should have been looked forward to with considerable interest. However it may appeal to Australian bird students, it must certainly be disappointing to progressive ornithologists in other parts of the world.

The Committee carries the principal of priority for genera, species and subspecies, no further back than the 'works' of John Gould 'entitled, "The Birds of Australia."' Gould's names however are superseded (a) "where they were preoccupied in some other branch of zoology, (b) where there had been a clear mis-identification of extra-limital and other forms, (c) where in the light of later knowledge genera had been rejected or new genera created, and (d) manifest errors." For admitted genera, species and subspecies described since the dates of the respective issues of Gould's works, and prior to the dates of the British Museum Catalogue of Birds, the names of the latter work are adopted subject to the above exceptions, while for admitted genera, etc., described later, the name used by the author has been "as far as possible accepted." Along with this we have a statement that a binomial nomenclature is used throughout, and that "all modifications of species ranging to and comprehending subspecies are brought into classification and named, but geographical races are not so, unless such modifications present some material distinguishable differences."

These principles we think constitute the most remarkable 'Code of Nomenclature' that has been framed in recent times.

The Committee would have accomplished its purpose and have freed itself from much adverse criticism if it had adopted the suggestion of Sir E. Ray Lankester, which is quoted on p. 13, and simply presented an 'authoritative list of names' without attempting to cite any rules or explanations.

As it is, the members seem to have failed utterly in comprehending the problem before them. They were surely aware of the fact that in ornithology as in every branch of zoology and botany we are confronted today

¹ Official Check-List of the Birds of Australia by Check-List Committee, Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union. Adopted at Launceston, 19th November, 1912. With Report. Melbourne: Walker, May & Co., Printers, Mackillop Street. 1913. Supplement to "The Emu," Vol. XII, January, 1913. Svo, pp. 1-116. Price to Non-Members, 5 shillings. Address Hon. Secretary R. A. O. U., Zool. Gardens, Melbourne.